

Legislative Session 2002

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Constituent Report and Update



From the Desk of Representative Mike Carrell

Dear friends,

This legislative session ended on time — and while some major problems were addressed, like transportation, budget shortfalls were again papered over. It has been frustrating for you and I know it was for me. Through all of this, I've done my best to represent you both in Olympia and in our community.

Representing you first means listening to your concerns. Over the years, I have listened to you at town hall meetings, on the phone, in surveys and even at the local grocery store. Your message to me has always been that you want to be included in the legislative process when big legislative changes are being considered. I need to know what you think — what your priorities are and what issues concern you — so I can passionately represent you and be your advocate in state government.

Representing you means that I do research on issues like property taxes and write legislation to change public policy, but it also means being your advocate with government. If you have a problem with a government agency, I work to resolve these disputes by acting as a mediator between you and the agency. Personally mediating these disputes often leads to solutions that are agreeable to both parties.

Some problems can't be so easily resolved because they involve multiple levels of government. This is why I have been very involved in building a new bipartisan alliance of Pierce County legislators, and city and county government officials.

Following this legislative session, I briefed the city councils of University Place, Lakewood, Tacoma, Fircrest and Steilacoom. I asked them to join with me and other Pierce County legislators to coordinate our efforts to protect and better serve the people we represent. That coalition-building effort is ongoing.

I appreciate your calls and letters, and your support. Please know that I am here to serve you.

Mike

Town hall Meetings

► Saturday, May 18

Lakewood Town Hall Meeting

9:00 to 10:00 am

Lakewood Library
Meeting room
6300 Wildaire Road SW

11:00 to Noon

Tacoma City Fire Station
Meeting room - Station 16
7217 6th Avenue

(Parking in rear in
Park & Ride lot only)

► Wednesday, May 22

University Place Town Hall Meeting

7:00 to 8:00 pm

University Place Library
Meeting room
3605 Bridgeport Way W

**28th
Legislative
District**

Rep. Mike Carrell • 28th District



Mike works on the House floor with Rep. John Lovick from Mill Creek.

Honoring the people, honoring Washington's constitution . . .

Article 1, Section 1 of the State Constitution says, "All political power is inherent in the people, and governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and are established to protect and maintain individual rights." This statement is more than just words on paper. It is the guiding principle of my approach as your state representative.

I believe that legislators should honor initiatives passed by the people. The Legislature should not pick and choose which ones to honor nor should legislators try to "punish" the people for choices they make through the initiative process of lawmaking.

Yet, that is just what the Democrat-controlled Legislature did this year in deleting the two-thirds vote requirement of I-601. Initiative 601 set spending limits and required a "supermajority" to raise your taxes. This move allowed for higher taxes, as well as tapping into our emergency money



reserves to close a budget deficit. The shortfall was partly created by bad legislative decisions last year, when the Legislature spent \$700 million more than state income from taxes.

Fighting for public safety in our neighborhoods . . .

Lost in the dust of battle that I and other Pierce County legislators fought last year to protect our county against sex predators were the victories we scored to keep our communities safe. These victories became apparent this year when the Legislature forced six other counties to get ready to house sex predators in local group homes.

Pierce County is not on this list to receive these sex predator group homes, nor shall we until all other counties have accepted their fair share. We are protected for years to come from having 3-bed group homes (or halfway houses) placed directly into our neighborhoods.

This means there will be no such facilities in our communities for over ten years. I can't overstate the importance of this victory for public safety in Pierce County. It was made possible by a great deal of effort and a whole lot of cooperation among Pierce County elected officials at all levels. We came together to make a difference for you.

As far as McNeil Island goes, contrary to excessive estimates by the governor and attorney general, there is only one sex predator at the LRA "transition" facility on McNeil Island and very few in the pipeline to arrive any time soon. This is good news.

Good news at Fort Steilacoom . . .

The project to preserve Fort Steilacoom has taken a huge step forward, as a matter of fact, new construction has just begun. Pierce County has signed a contract with Korsmo Construction to pull the Red Barn straight and stabilize the building, which was in great danger of collapsing.

Fort Steilacoom is an important part of Pierce County history — and it has been my pleasure to work cooperatively with Pierce County, the City of Lakewood and Korsmo Construction to preserve this piece of our local heritage. It is my hope that this part of our past being preserved for the future is used for community events.

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Transportation ... It's your choice - or is it?

Two very important transportation bills were passed this session. The statewide gas tax proposal will raise the gas tax 9 cents per gallon over two years, increase the sales tax on buying a car by 1 percent, and increase the taxes on heavy trucks by 30 percent. At the insistence of the House of Representatives, this measure will be put before the people on the November ballot.

This bill would raise your transportation taxes by 40 percent. I feel strongly that the Legislature should seek your input on big tax changes like this. I voted to send this measure to you for your vote. Fortunately, minutes before the end of the legislative session, the Senate finally agreed with the House and you will get to vote on the gas tax increase.

The other measure the Legislature approved is the "regional" transportation bill that may include Pierce, King and Snohomish counties. I joined with 11 other Pierce County legislators (from both parties) to vote against this plan. Only 2 Pierce County legislators voted for it.

This regional transportation proposal would put tolls on any highway that has new lanes added, such as new HOV lanes. Among other taxes, it would also increase car tabs to \$100. If the Pierce County Council agrees to become part of the plan, and if one representative of either Pierce or Snohomish County votes with King County, they can approve a set of projects that is then sent to a "regional vote." Pierce County voters will not get to vote separately to join or reject this regional plan. This plan would raise your taxes and fees much more than the gas tax. I plan to work with our county council, the cities and other Pierce County legislators on this issue.



Making sense of the budget ...



The state budget writers this session drafted a supplemental state operating budget with a \$1.4 billion deficit. With this sort of revenue shortfall, I am concerned that there was no serious effort to bring government spending under control.

Unfortunately, now that we need sound judgment more than ever, the Legislature ignored some of the causes of increased costs, like the 38 percent growth in agency management personnel over the last four years. It also ignored the state economic environment that is unfriendly to job providers, causing companies like Boeing to move out of state. What the Legislature did do was to cut vital programs for the mentally ill, elderly and disabled. State government needs to rethink its priorities.

The state budget writers also cashed out \$2 billion of the state's tobacco settlement payments at less than 25 cents on the dollar. This move uses one-time money to fund ongoing services, mortgages these funds for 30 years, and reduces revenue intended to fund important health care services.

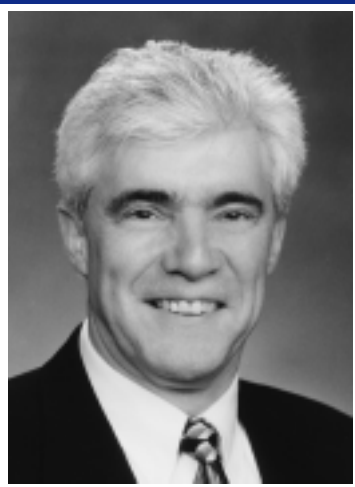
State Representative
Mike Carrell

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District 28

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**TOWN HALL Meeting
information inside!**